

TEACHING THE DRAMA
AND THE ESSAY

BROTHER LEO

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BY

BROTHER LEO

OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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NOTE

THIS little book is made up of talks to teachers and of papers that originally saw the light in the hospitable pages of *The Catholic School Journal*. It has no pretensions whatever and makes no attempt to offer a complete and articulated "philosophy" of teaching literature. But it seeks to be of service to the young teacher who in perplexity remarks: "I must teach a Shakespearean play and a book of selected essays next term. How am I to go about it?"

No intrinsic originality inheres in the view of vital appreciation set forth in these pages. Aristotle's conception of the emotionally cathartic function of tragedy, Shakespeare's ideal of holding the mirror up to nature, Milton's plea for the great book as the precious life blood of a master spirit, and, in our own day, Mr. J. B. Kerfoot's definition of reading as a form of living—all these opinions agree in the recognition of the essentially vital character of literary study. But old truths sometimes need new renderings, however partial and inadequate.

Behind every book, even the slightest and slen-

derest book, lies something akin to hope. And so, behind this book is the wish that somewhere or other there may be a jaded teacher of English who will find in these pages the seeds of a fresh outlook and a new incentive, or a novice in the profession who will gather from them an idea or two to help him on his way.

L.

St. Mary's College,
Oakland, California.
May 15, 1921.

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TEACHING THE DRAMA AND THE ESSAY

CHAPTER I

MATTER, MANNER AND MOOD

LET us begin by devising a fable. Four eager and inquiring boys, intent on making the most of a holiday, went together to investigate the process of digging gold in a mountain mine. They spent several hours examining the machinery and implements, interviewing the miners and watching the work. The next day was a school day, and each of the four was called upon by the teacher to tell what he had learned.

Said the first: "There was one miner—a man with gray hair and big, bushy eyebrows—who told me ever so many interesting things. He has been all over the world and he has seen kings, and the pope and the pyramids. And he knows so many stories about insects and railroad trains and mountain climbing. He is a very jolly man, and even when he is working he is always singing to himself and saying funny things to the other miners."

Said the second: "I noticed that any place in the mountains will not do for a mine. The prospectors have certain rules for discovering a good place, and they take samples of ore and send it to experts to be analyzed. Then there is a certain way in which the miners must start operations, and they construct the mine by digging along a ledge and propping up the tunnel with wooden beams."

Said the third: "One of the men gave me these nuggets and this little bag of gold dust. These parts of the nugget aren't of much use, but I had to take them, of course, because otherwise I couldn't have these parts, the real gold. One of the nuggets I am going to keep as a souvenir, just as it is; the other I am going to bring to the jeweler to have him make a pair of earrings for my mother; and the gold dust I am going to bring down to the mint to see how much money I can get for it."

The fourth pupil was silent for a little while; but, when urged by the teacher to tell what he had learned, he answered simply: "I had a long talk with the jolly miner who has been all over the world; and I think I understand just how they mine gold; and I have two nuggets and a bag of gold dust, too."

Let us substitute a literary mine—any one of the world's immortal books—for the gold mine of our allegory, and then we shall see clearly enough that the first boy was interested in the *mood*, the second in the *manner*, the third in the *matter*; and that the

fourth, who was unquestionably the finest type of student, was interested in all three.

From the point of view of *matter*, the study of literature is a dubious success unless the student has something tangible to show for his work, unless, so to say, he has brought away with him some of the gold dust of *inspiration* and a nugget or two of *information*. We are to gain from our study of books something besides impressions of the author's mood and personality, something besides a perception of how he works and what tools he uses. We must likewise gain knowledge, knowledge in the nugget form of fact, and knowledge in the dust form of truth.

Some of the information that we get from literature we may profitably use to adorn our minds as the third boy purposed to employ the souvenir nugget. A knowledge of certain facts, we cheerfully grant, is largely ornamental; yet the ornamental has its place in art and in life, and some of us would be appreciably better off if we had sooner learned the wisdom of devoting a measure of time and effort to the acquisition of what very erudite gentlemen tolerantly designate as the minor arts and graces. It is perfectly true that a man may live in a house utterly destitute of pictures, tapestries, marbles and bric-a-brac, just as the Puritans may have said their prayers in bare and whitewashed churches, but he will be happier in his leisure hours and richer in his manner of life if he gathers about him me-

mentoes of his travels and souvenirs of the joys and sorrows of his early years. God has blessed youth with a memory quick and retentive that youth may garner from books and life ornaments of thought destined to prove sources of solace and refreshment in the years to come.

"I don't read books," said a vigorous business man one day. "I don't need books; and, anyhow, I haven't time." "Poor fellow!" murmured a philosopher who chanced to overhear the remark. "What a dismal old age you are going to have!"

And I think the philosopher was right. For there will come a time in the life of the vigorous business man when he will be no longer vigorous, when the cares and delights of his active career will have been taken up by younger hands; and then, if he delight not in books, if his mind be like a room uncarpeted and unadorned—God pity him!

But the information we get from literature is not all ornamental; much of it, perhaps the better part of it, resembles the nugget which the boy was going to have wrought into jewelry. We are all jewelers in this little human life of ours; and if we are honest men and discriminating we prefer to work on real gold rather than on pinchbeck. Now the real gold of life and art we can find in abundance in the works of the great poets and story-tellers, dramatists and essayists. We must dig for it, as Ruskin wisely warns us, but it is there. But it does not come out in finished form. What we can get

from even the greatest writer is but the ore, a handful of nuggets now and then; and we must labor over it in the smelter of our meditation and fashion it to our liking with the file of our common sense and the hammer of our enlightened will. Then, truly, like the boy who wanted to give a pair of earrings to his mother, may we minister soundly and fruitfully to the fellow creatures who come within the sphere of our influence.

Not only information constitutes the matter of literary study. A yet more important yield of the literary mine is inspiration. We cannot get far, in letters or in life, without it; for if information is the steam engine, inspiration is the steam. Inspiration, though tangent on mood and manner, is more extensive than either; it implies more than the pleasure of sharing a writer's mood, more than the æsthetic satisfaction of seeing how a work of art is put together. Inspiration is based on knowledge, vital knowledge; and it furnishes us with refreshment and encouragement and light. It is the greatest thing, the finest thing, that books—real books—can give us.

Years ago I knew a teacher who from many points of view might be regarded as a burdened, a disappointed, a disillusioned man. Humanly speaking, he was a failure. His health was shattered, his relations with his superiors were strained, his influence in his classroom was nugatory. Had he been unconscious of all this his case would not have

been in the least tragical, for he could then have done what many unconscious failures do—live in a fool's paradise of unwitting delusion and self-satisfied pretense. But he knew he was a failure; a failure more complete than the little world about him could perceive, for during many months even the heavens were as brass to his prayers and the consolations of the spiritual life were denied him. He rose ultimately from his mound of sorrow and, like holy Job, enjoyed presently the fruits natural and supernatural of his patient efforts. But what was it that had aided him to pass through that somber valley and mount the steep ascent that led him to sunshine and to peace?

It was the inspiration he discovered in great books. Nerve-wracked in body and inexpressibly weary in soul, he would drag himself from his arduous and apparently futile classroom duties, fling himself into a chair by the open window and spend an hour in exalted communion with one of the royal aristocracy of letters. He was no linguist and disliked translations, so many world masterpieces were closed books to him; but in English he covered a wide range, reading with little system but with great absorption Newman, Carlyle, Coleridge, Goldsmith, Tennyson, Keats; breasting the bitter but purifying current of Shakespeare's tragedies, unravelling the skein of life so dexterously fashioned by Dickens and Thackeray. And every day, when the community bell called him to community duties, he arose

renewed, refreshed, reinvigorated in body and in mind. For every day his hour of reading had furnished the armory of his spirit with a new set of weapons for his grilling warfare; every day from the exhaustless mine of literature he came forth holding tightly in his hands a bag of gold dust of inspiration. And day by day was his spirit chastened and his outlook widened and his heart enlarged; and he saw God and himself and his fellow men in an altered and a clearer light; and when the hour of his trial was over and the shadows lifted and his liberation was at hand, he stepped forth to meet the old vexations with the insight and courage of a new man.

That man was no scholar and no genius; yet he learned the secret of fruitful literary study. He fell a willing victim to the witchery of artistic structure, and from the contemplation of the formal excellence of the books he read he developed in his own mental processes and in his own view of life a sense of clearness and variety, symmetry and proportion. He lost his own troubles and discordances for the moment to share the varying moods of the authors he read and thus learned some of the secrets of what is called style. And, most important of all, he accepted the books before him as vital things, as portraits of life, commentaries on life, interpretations of life; and hence came to him the fine fruits of understanding and sympathy, wisdom

and realization, enlightenment of mind and liberation of spirit.

Yes, he learned the secret of literary study. For literary study concerns itself with those three things: The relation of books to life, which is the *matter* of literature and the basis of *vital* literary study; the structure, the technique, of books, which is the *manner* of literature and the basis of *formal* literary study; and the personality of books, which is the *mood* of literature and the basis of *æsthetic* literary study. For the appreciation of literature is æsthetic, formal and vital, these three; and the greatest of these is the vital.

CHAPTER II

THE VITAL APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE

THE right teaching of a literary masterpiece is fundamentally and essentially a process of appreciation. The book we are teaching has some excellence and we want our pupils to realize that excellence. We may tell them interesting facts about the author, we may read them comments by distinguished critics, we may have them study the historical and social background of the book. But all these things, and many other such things, are secondary; were we to stop here, we should fall into the error of the old-fashioned manual of literature and let the pupils know everything about a writer except the things he wrote. Our conscious and directing purpose is to lead our pupils to appreciate the book.

We distinguish three kinds of appreciation—formal, æsthetic and vital. Formal appreciation concerns itself with the make-up of the masterpiece, with the materials used, the workmanship of the author. It covers all the ground of grammar and much of the field of rhetoric. Are the sentences long or short, declarative or interrogative, periodic, loose or balanced? Are the words in national, re-

putable and present use? Has the book structure—a beginning, a middle and an end? Such questions deal with details of formal appreciation.

Æsthetic appreciation pertains to style. It formulates the generally accepted qualities of style—such as conciseness, ornateness, vigor, clearness, urbanity—and studies the book from that point of view. Is the author graceful in thought and expression? Is he suggestive in his narrative and descriptive passages? Does he manifest sublimity, humor, pathos? Is his work mainly dramatic or mainly pictorial? And how, in these things, does this book compare with books previously read? Such questions deal with details of æsthetic appreciation.

Vital appreciation, as the adjective indicates, dwells upon the book in its relation to human life. It considers the characters in the book as live human beings, the settings of the book as a real human background, the plot of the book as the crossing and re-crossing of human motives and human plans. It is on the lookout for commentaries on life and on living, and such commentaries it investigates in the light of ethical teaching and personal experience. Do men and women say such things and do such things in actual life? Do the characters in the book remind me of any of my acquaintances? Do some of the comments of the author apply especially to my life and my problems? What has the reading of this book taught me con-

cerning God and my fellow man and myself? Such questions deal with details of vital appreciation.

When we consider how literature is generally taught and how teachers' handbooks maintain that it ought to be taught, we find that the value of æsthetic appreciation is recognized, that the value of formal appreciation is over-emphasized, that the value of vital appreciation is either inadequately perceived or absolutely ignored. The children are encouraged to study the meaning and derivation of words, to point out figures of speech, to analyze the structure of episodes; but, generally speaking, it would seem to be true that they are not encouraged to regard literature as a portrait and interpretation of life. "Even the best editions of our day," writes the late George Gissing in "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," "have so much of the mere school-book; you feel so often that the man does not regard his author as literature, but simply as a text." This is surely a mistaken notion of the function and aims of literary study.

Another mistake into which some pedagogical theorists fall is the assumption that these three sorts of appreciation are arranged in a terrace; that there can be no æsthetic appreciation until the formal appreciation has been completed, and that there can be no vital appreciation until the pupils have mastered the æsthetic aspects of the work studied. It has even been said that the study of literature should be exclusively formal in the grades, exclusively

æsthetic in the high school and exclusively vital in the college; that first should come the "drill" period, next the "syntax" period and finally the period of appreciation of the book as a contribution to one's philosophy of life.

It cannot be too vigorously pointed out that such a conception of pedagogical procedure possesses but one merit and that a dubious one, namely, mechanical symmetry. As a matter of fact, there is room for all three kinds of appreciation in every school grade; all three of them should come into play in the teaching of every piece of literature; and, alike in the primary class and in the senior year of college, most stress should be placed on vital appreciation, less stress on æsthetic appreciation and least stress on formal appreciation. The great, the tragic error of much college teaching today—a heritage in part derived from the study of the ancient languages and in part from the methods in vogue in the German universities—is to make true appreciation of literature as an art degenerate into the study of philology as a science. "How could it be otherwise," asks Dr. O'Hagan, in his essay on "The Degradation of Scholarship," "when pedantry with all its assumption and presumption usurps the throne of scholarship, and true culture often finds but little welcome in the classrooms and academic halls of our land?"

The over-emphasis on the formal and æsthetic aspects of literary study to the exclusion of essential

vital appreciation is happily indicated by the Reverend Edward F. Garesché, S. J., in his *Catholic School Journal* article on "The Training of Writers": "It is rather amusing in the retrospect to see how in the lives of successful authors their school work in English has sometimes played a negligible part in their training for writing because they detested grammar and hated rhetoric and because sometimes the models presented for them for study in the classroom were so dissected and anatomized that they lost every semblance of the fair and living form of literature."

The study of literature will be a fair and living thing only when it consists mainly of vital appreciation. And vital appreciation can exist only when both teacher and pupils possess the feelings for literature, when they realize that books are human documents, filled with wisdom human and divine, abounding with portraits of men and movements, embodiments of human thought and human passion, things palpitating and athrill with human strivings and human speech.

The right attitude toward the great books of the world is suggested to the teacher by the Catholic poet, Aubrey de Vere, in his introduction to "Selections from the Poets." He quotes Bacon's significant saying that "it is the office of poetry to submit the shows of things to the desires of the mind"; and he amplifies the thought as follows:

"Meaning by the mind, the aspirations of that

mens melior, or noble mind, which is the part of man that retains the image of God and thirsts for immortality. The world of sense, since the fall, has lost the glory of that light which dwelt upon its countenance as it was first created. In poetry a portion of that light is restored; for poetry is an ideal art, which invests objects with a grandeur, a freedom, and a purity not their own. When we speak of 'poetic Justice,' we refer to the fact that in poetry we require a justice more palpable and swift than that which the eye discerns in the course of actual events. When we speak of poetic Truth, we refer to a truth essential and universal, and free from the accidents to which the detail of common things is, in appearance at least, subjected. Not less sacred is that Beauty of which the poets in every age have sung. It is nothing merely material, although it manifests itself in material things. From them it looks forth, as the soul looks forth from the face."

What de Vere says specifically of poetry applies equally to all great literature, to dramas and novels and essays. All great books are transcripts of human life. They purge life of its superfluities and non-essentials, they compress it in point of time and focus interest on its significant conditions and qualities. To read Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur," for example, is to concentrate upon certain phases of human experience, actual or potential; to understand the feeling of emptiness and impotence that

comes after even mighty achievements, to feel the weariness that follows defeat, to realize that faith and faith alone can sustain a man in the great crises of life.

And so it comes to pass that great books impart a knowledge of human nature—general and particular. They teach us to know man and to know men. How one grows in spiritual and intellectual stature as he reads Macaulay's essay on Milton! He discovers that Cavalier and Puritan are not merely two figures in English history but that they are two eternal human types, and that he himself approximates to one or the other and possesses corresponding advantages and defects. He sees now as never before that loyalty is sometimes unrighteous and that righteousness is sometimes disloyal; that the good man finds it hard to be a tolerant man, and that the man who puts not virtue in the first place will be ultimately overcome. And the great blind poet, hitherto an abstraction, becomes real to him, and like himself a child of Heaven and a child of sin, like himself the victim of pain and penury and circumstance, like himself tormented by unrealized ideals and the agony of unrest. And all this and ever so much more, be it remarked in passing, one may secure from the essay without so much as suspecting that Macaulay wrote balanced sentences.

The vital study of literature appreciates great books as veritable treasure hoards of wisdom. In

Shakespeare's "As You Like It" even Touchstone's foolish fancies are singularly wise. "Ay," cries the philosophic man of motley, "now am I in Arden; the more fool I; when I was at home I was in a better place: but travellers must be content." What a world of suffering might not we all be spared—suffering, too, that hath no relish of salvation in it—if we could only realize that we have not here a lasting city, that no matter whither we go or what we undertake we are bound to find annoyances and inconveniences, suspicion and ingratitude! Verily, travellers must be content! Content to take fair days and foul even as they come, to see the best there is to see in forest flirts and banished dukes, to read complacently both the leaves of the forest and the leaves of the Book of Life—"whose pages," says Jeffery Farnol, "are forever a-turning, wherein are marvels and wonders undreamed; things to weep over, and some few to laugh at, if one has but eyes in one's head to see withal."

And great books somehow seem to grow with our growth. Dante means more to us today than he did ten years ago, and ten years hence he will be more potent still. Our reading acts upon our living and our living reacts upon the books we love; and age cannot wither them nor custom stale their infinite variety. It is as though every year another candle were lighted, an added illumination thrown upon the familiar printed page; and as we read, lo, new visions of life arise before us, new insights

come to caution and to guide, new moods give zest to living and to labor and we lay us down anew to pleasant dreams.

Vital appreciation means religious appreciation; for God speaks to us in the world's great books. If we study them exclusively as grammarians or philologists or rhetoricians, I fail to understand how we can hear in them His voice; but once we take them up as fragrant human documents the heavens truly lie about us for we begin to perceive somewhat of the ways of God with men. The old belief that poets were possessed of wise and friendly spirits who spoke in them and through them is not an idle fancy, for in our best moments and in our best work it is God's artistry that is wrought. Reflections of His Infinite Goodness and Truth and Beauty are caught in literature and garnered for the children of today and tomorrow; and surely, if the Catholic school is to live up to its mission and its ideal, it is right and necessary that its pupils learn to read those books with open minds and hearts.

CHAPTER III

MATTER IN THE DRAMA

THE objective of the vital study of literature is to realize the truth of the definition of art as a **picture and an interpretation of human life**; to secure increased knowledge of and sympathy with our fellow men; to learn more about ourselves, our tendencies, our prospects, our environment, our potentialities; to grasp a little better some conception of God's plan in dealing with man and with men.

So much for theory. Now, let us apply the theory of vital appreciation to Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," select certain aspects of the drama susceptible of correlation with human life as we see it and know it, and frame a few suggestions regarding the study of the play from the point of view of *matter*.

Like unto Us. Despite the fact that this play was written more than three hundred years ago about people who lived more than two thousand years ago, it is distinctly up-to-date. Fashions in clothes have changed, and social customs may have varied somewhat, and methods of warfare have grown more death-dealing and intensive, but

in every essential—and in very many non-essentials—life is much the same in the play as in our own day and place and generation. Then as now the game of politics consisted largely in plotting to overthrow a ruler on the pretext that he had taken too much power unto himself. Then as now conspiracy thrived best in the dark, and yet news of it managed to leak out. Then as now mobs were swung hither and yon by means of appeals to their emotions—then by orations, now by newspapers. Then as now grave misunderstandings arose between friends and brothers-in-arms. Then as now great men like Cæsar and Brutus were most appreciated after they were dead.

Idealist and Politician. Dozens of men like Brutus and Cassius walk our streets today. The Brutus sort are idealists; the Cassius sort are politicians. Brutus has exalted motives in joining the conspiracy; he is a philosopher and a patriot and is remarkably disinterested. Cassius organizes the cabal against Cæsar mainly because of his personal antipathy for Cæsar; he is plainly an opportunist, intent ever on the main chance. Brutus loves Rome more; Cassius loves Cassius more. Of the two Brutus is by far the nobler man.

And yet, in the practical affairs of life, in the details of daily conduct, it is Cassius who possesses the greater share of pragmatic wisdom. Every time there is a difference of opinion between Brutus and Cassius, Brutus is noble and Cassius is right. Thus

Cassius wants to do away with Antony on the ides of March, while Brutus opposes such a course as ruthless and sanguinary; yet allowing Antony to live proves the ultimate undoing of the conspirators. Again, when Brutus consents, most cordially and generously, to allow Antony to deliver Cæsar's funeral oration, Cassius foresees the results and vigorously expostulates. As usual, he is overruled; and, as usual, he is right. Being a practical politician, Cassius has a salutary distrust of his own powers; being an idealist, Brutus takes it for granted that once he, Brutus, has addressed the multitude, no harm can be done by Antony. He is like the teacher who had occasion to leave his class and was told that his youthful charges were playing riotously. "Impossible," he said calmly "Before leaving, I told them to remain perfectly quiet."

The intimacy between these two men brings out another important truth: If the bad affects the good, the good also affects the bad. Cassius leads Brutus into the conspiracy and to eventual ruin; but Brutus makes Cassius a bigger and a nobler man. If we compare the Cassius of the first act—the unscrupulous, time-serving, sneering, scheming politician—with the Cassius of the last act who speaks not unworthily of life and duty and goes to his death with something akin to grandeur, we shall perceive how contact with a noble mind begets nobility.

The fact that Brutus and Cassius, defeated in

their aspirations, seek surcease in self-destruction is a striking example of whither leads the ambition that is not based on spiritual motives. They were not Christians, they knew naught of Our Lord's teaching and example; and so on the field of Philippi they did that which, from their pagan viewpoint, was really the only consistent thing to do. Theoretical ethics may prove to us very conclusively that suicide is cowardly and illogical; but in a practical issue—when he faces a situation that seems hopeless—the man who acts from purely natural motives takes refuge in self-destruction. Brutus can theorize about the evil of suicide as well as any one:

"I do find it cowardly and vile,
For fear of what might fall, so to prevent
The time of life."

But almost in the same breath, when facing the prospect of being dragged in disgraceful chains through the streets of Rome, Brutus announces his determination to fall by his own hand rather than suffer so great an indignity:

"No, Cassius, no; think not, thou noble Roman,
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome;
He bears too great a mind."

In literature as in life the man who kills himself is the man who has not known God or who has turned away from God; to lean upon human motives merely is to lean upon a supple reed.

Arrested Development. Were we to know nothing of Julius Cæsar save what we learn about him in this play we should be loath to consider him a great man. We find him here insufferably vain and pompous and opinionated, extremely stubborn in little things, changing his mind over and over again and then prating about his polar star constancy. Can this be the man who in point of fact won so many victories on the field and in the forum and who left the impress of his personality on the greatest empire the world has seen? Is Shakespeare attempting to caricature an immortal? If this be Cæsar, what is the matter with him?

Cæsar, as Shakespeare conceives him, is a most fascinating study in arrested development. He has achieved supreme power in the Roman state; he has defeated his formidable rival, Pompey; he is in fact, if not in name, a king. And he rests on his laurels; he stops growing. His victories have made him over-confident, over-secure; his place in the sun has turned his head. And so we find him uttering such nonsense as,

"danger knows full well
That Cæsar is more dangerous than he:
We are two lions litter'd in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible."

"Cæsar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Cæsar, they are vanished."

"I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar."

Do we not recognize a Cæsar or two in actual life? Are there not men, risen to high place in civic, in academic or ecclesiastical life, who have a strikingly similar good conceit of themselves? Earlier in their careers they were sane and steady and humble; they then recognized the necessity of walking in the ways of prudence, of not trusting unduly to their powers and intuitions; and so they were successful, and so they climbed high. And now, having reached the goal of their endeavors, they become vain and childish and self-sufficient; they hunger after fawning and flattery; they develop numerous pettish whims and eccentricities; and their guiding principle is not, "Non nobis Domine, non nobis," but "always I am Cæsar!"

The Secret of Oratory. It is not without interest to draw a few comparisons between the speech of Brutus and the oration of Antony. Brutus makes absolutely no appeal to the emotions of his auditors; Antony appeals to nothing else, though in places he makes an elaborate pretense of "reasoning with" the citizens. As Le Bon has admirably pointed out in his "Psychology of the Crowd," real men in a real mob are never influenced by argument pure and simple. "Logic," says Cardinal Newman in his "Grammar of Assent," "makes but a sorry rhetoric with the multitude; first shoot round corners; and you may not despair of converting by syllogism." This Brutus did not know,

and he failed; this Antony did know, and he succeeded.

Furthermore, Antony suits his speech to the comprehension of his auditors. Realizing that he is not talking to trained thinkers, he is far from being logical, cold and formal. As he himself says, he only speaks right on. His is the art that conceals art. Brutus makes use of abstract terms—"love," "valor," "ambition," "honor," "bondman," "freeman." But Antony revels in the concrete, the specific; he leaps down from the pulpit, holds aloft Cæsar's blood-stained cloak, fingers the rents made by the conspirators' daggers and exhibits the gashed and gory corpse itself.

Nor is this all. Besides drawing the sympathy and compassion of his hearers to the dead Cæsar, he skillfully plays upon their self-interest and their self-love; he pauses at times, seemingly overcome with grief, that his words may the better sink into their hearts; he makes the ostensibly courteous expression, "honorable man," the vehicle of a subtle and ever deepening irony; to whet the curiosity and sustain the interest of his auditors, he delays the reading of Cæsar's will. Despite his own studiously modest disavowal of the fact, Antony is an accomplished and resourceful orator. He has the art of talking down to his audience, of observing the effects of his speaking, of reading the expressions that flit over the faces massed before him. And those men who, a few moments earlier, would

scarce suffer him to mount the rostrum, who ground their teeth and shook their fists and muttered, " 'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here!" —these men are now to Antony as clay in the potter's hand. And presently the once "noble Brutus" is a murderer and a villain, those "honorable men" are detestable traitors; and Cæsar, the tyrant, is "royal Cæsar" and "most noble Cæsar."

The Art of Handling Men. Much practical wisdom is to be found in the way Cassius—who pre-eminently knows human nature—enlists friends and adherents. When he seeks to win Brutus over to the conspiracy he talks much of honor and patriotism and eloquently laments the passing of the good old times; but the blunt and corpulent Casca he merely invites to dinner—and I am sure that the food was excellent and that the feast was not in all respects in harmony with prohibitory perfection. He foresees things, too; note how he arranges to have Antony drawn away from the senate chamber before the assassination. He knows when to apply the spur: "Casca, be sudden, for we fear prevention." Later on he strengthens the revolutionary army by spending money lavishly. Most important of all, he knows when to yield to Brutus, even though Brutus is less experienced than he; Cassius is much too skillful a leader of men to act on the assumption that he is always in the right—he can on occasion give an inch and take a mile.

It would be an easy thing to dwell more fully on other vital aspects of "Julius Cæsar." Repeated readings of the play, frequent reconstructions of its most striking scenes, familiar intercourse with its leading characters, assiduous meditation on the pearls of wisdom with which it abounds, and, more than anything else, insistent comparison of the play with the life in us and around us—these things will bring us close to the sources of its power. The tragedy of "Julius Cæsar" possesses that one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. This it is which verifies the prophecy of Cassius when, standing in the senate chamber over the prostrate form of "the mightiest Julius," he waved his bloody sword and cried in words immortal:

"How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!"

CHAPTER IV

MATTER IN THE ESSAY

WE conveniently divide all literary productions into four classes: The poem, the drama, the novel and the essay. Of these the essay is at once the most varied and the most inclusive; in its case definition is all but impossible. Indeed, for practical purposes the most acceptable definition of the essay is a statement of what it is not, and we may truly say that the essay is that literary form which is not poetry, drama or fiction. Do we take up a piece of literature which does not square with our definition of the drama, the novel or the poem? Then we are justified in classifying it as an essay. For of all literary forms the essay is the most elastic. Essays are Cardinal Newman's "Apologia pro Vita Sua" and Brother Azarias's "Philosophy of Literature"; essays are Francis Thompson's impassioned delineation of Shelley and Charles Lamb's disquisition on "Poor Relations"; essays are Milton's "Tractate on Education" and Archbishop Spalding's "Opportunity."

In the essay are contained some of the richest treasures of English literature, treasures which are part of the intellectual inheritance of our pupils;

and it is the duty of the teacher of English to introduce our children to this vast store of culture and learning and delight. The task has special difficulties, the chief of which is the impression shared by most young people that the essay, even at its best, makes dull and dry reading. The average child, once his eyes are opened to the charm of poetry, turns naturally and willingly to the treasure-trove of verse; once his imagination is kindled, he finds stimulating pleasure in studying the drama; and as for the novel, it is merely a matter of directing his taste toward the best, for he revels in prose fiction. But the essay sounds forbidding and looks austere; and the first step in its teaching is to convey the conviction that, rightly understood and rightly approached, the essay is a source of information and of joy.

How can this be done? Mainly by contagion and by example. Here, as in everything else, the teacher will succeed in proportion as he himself is fond of essay reading, in proportion as he himself knows the value of communing with the great English essayists, in proportion as he himself turns to the essay for enjoyment and refreshment. Then let him take one of his favorite essays into class and read a portion of it to his pupils, stopping now and then for a brief comment of explanation and appreciation. The method is simple, almost ridiculously simple; but it is pedagogically sound and wonderfully potent. The work of the teacher is

more than half done when he has brought his pupils to see that wise men and good men and charming men have enshrined some of their finest thoughts and moods in the essay form.

"After all," wrote Mr. Joseph Francis Wickham in *America* a few years ago, "the essayist is very akin to the poet, especially the writer of the familiar, personal essay. For he can put the whole of this little work into his philosophy, weaving the long stretches of centuries into a tapestry full of color and glow and imagery. He can distil the memory of absent friends, the echoes of once-heard voices, the gladness of youth, the joy of sunlight, the dismay of vain desires, the triumph of realized dreams, the glory of a moonlit sea, the grandeur of a snow-storm, the sweetness of a child's smile, the majesty of a Roman ruin, the thousand, thousand realities and recollections and visions that round out our lives; from all this he can win the essence, and give it to us in an abiding fragrance that can comfort and content and charm. We all seek comfort; we all seek content; but no less are we ever on the quest for that elusive something known as charm. We look for it in plays, in houses, in villages, in people, in so many things under the sun; and we find it in many things if we look long enough. If we wish, and wish sincerely enough, we cannot miss a very delightful, perennial charm in the gentle art of reading essays."

To every striving teacher of English I urgently

commend that paragraph for long and fruitful meditation. It does not directly tell us how to teach the essay, but it does something vastly more important; it indicates the spirit in which we should do our teaching.

It is possible to elaborate a lengthy and complex classification of essays, but for the present purpose it should suffice to group all essays into a threefold division: Essays of interest chiefly for their *matter*; essays of interest chiefly for their *manner*; and essays of interest chiefly for their *mood*. And in the study of any particular essay we have a sufficient basis for enlightened understanding when we examine it from those three viewpoints of *matter*, *manner* and *mood*.

The study of *matter* in the essay is an application of the principle of *vital appreciation* in literature. The essay gives us information, it adds definitely to our stock of knowledge; it broadens our view of life, it widens our range of sympathies; it modifies some of our crude opinions and impressions, it puts familiar things in a somewhat unusual light; it impresses us with certain great truths which heretofore we may have known but never realized; it teaches us some consoling and some humiliating things about ourselves and about other people.

A good example of the essay of *matter* is Ruskin's "Sesame and Lilies." It draws our attention to the importance of right reading, and it awakens our interest in worthwhile books. Be-

sides, it gives us hints as to the manner in which a book is to be read and warns us against wrong methods of reading and thinking. Under the spell of the writer's knowledge and style, we almost forget that we are reading a printed page; rather it seems that we are sitting by the fire beside a learned and kindly and affable gentleman who is telling us, out of the fulness of his mind and heart, some of the things he has learned in the course of his long experience with art and life and books.

How may we aid our pupils to secure a grasp of the *matter* of the essay? How may we enable them to draw from it both information and inspiration?

Gaining information is like shooting rabbits; you may walk all day through woods and fields with never a pull of the trigger, if you don't keep your eyes open. Knowledge comes to the alert. Listless readers generally learn little or nothing from books because they are on the alert for little or nothing. Hence, we must teach the pupils to expect information. For this purpose, before they have read the essay at all, it is well to have them make, either orally or in tabular form, a brief statement of what they know on the subject and of what they expect to discover in the reading of the essay. It is like teaching them before prayer to prepare their souls.

Again, encourage them to read with pencil in hand. That means to encourage the practice of note-taking—not the formal, ready-made notes

written on the blackboard by the teacher and slavishly copied by the automatic class—but those spontaneous notes which represent the reader's reaction to the essayist's stimulus. Let them list unfamiliar names, questionable opinions, statements of facts which seem to be incorrect or misleading, expressions of heretofore unrealized truth. Let them look up references, run down allusions, even now and then verify quotations; and let the notebooks—if there be notebooks—represent this individual work.

And, provided it is not overdone, there is value in the practice of summarizing the essay by paragraphs and by topics. The value inheres in the device if the work is done by pupils; it disappears if the teacher makes the summary and the students merely play follow-the-leader. Then, of course, class discussions, real discussions, will prove of value. The pupils should do most of the talking, and no one pupil should do too much of it. Out of the class discussions will grow debates, formal and informal, and from the debates the pupils will be sent back to the text for proofs and texts and similitudes. If, for example, Newman's essay on the university at Athens is studied in this thorough and individualistic way, every child in the class will finish the work with a good general knowledge of the content of essay, with a more minute knowledge of many things than he would otherwise se-

cure in ten years and with a definite understanding of what the great cardinal was talking about.

And as for inspiration—well, that is somewhat like the grace of God; it is beyond price and beyond mere human effort. But its basis is interest—broad, sane, cumulative interest; and that interest will always be found in the class where the teacher is a real lover of books. If the teacher is enthusiastic about Newman, if the teacher has learned from Newman some of the most valuable lessons of life, if the teacher is consciously striving to emulate Newman's gratifying clearness of thought and Newman's virile and idiomatic diction, if the teacher feels, in short, that Newman is called great in the kingdom of letters—in that class truly will the kingdom of letters be at hand.

CHAPTER V

MANNER IN THE DRAMA

THIS is not going to be a specimen lesson in English. Our purpose is, not to dictate methods of teaching Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," but to indicate the materials and the range of *formal appreciation*, as distinguished from the appreciation which we will call *æsthetic* and the appreciation which we call *vital*.

By formal appreciation we mean a study of the body of a literary masterpiece as distinguished from its soul. We investigate what might be called its physical, its mechanical elements. We observe of what materials it is composed, we note how its parts are put together, we discuss its external form and stature. It is the least important kind of appreciation; but it is not intrinsically unimportant. The principal phases of formal study may be summed up under eight heads: 1. Sources; 2. Whole Structure; 3. Part Structure; 4. Verse Form; 5. Figures of Speech; 6. Sentence Characteristics; 7. Word Characteristics; 8. Allusions and References.

1. **Sources.** The direct source of Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" is Sir Thomas North's English version of Plutarch's "Lives of the Noble Grecians

and Romans"; the indirect source is, of course, Plutarch's original of that famous work, especially the lives of Cæsar, Brutus and Antony. It is to be noted that in his selection of incidents Shakespeare follows Plutarch closely, and that sometimes he takes whole passages from the North translation, changing only a few words here and there. The student should make a detailed comparison of such parallel passages and endeavor to formulate the principles that guided Shakespeare in altering the prose version. Such principles are the exigencies of the verse form, verbal form, verbal economy, picturesqueness of presentation and the requirements of dramatic structure. Answers should be found for such questions as, What episodes in Plutarch did Shakespeare omit, and why? What was Shakespeare's motive in compressing the narrative in point of time? In his deviations from the text of North has Shakespeare invariably improved on his source, and in what way?

2. **Whole Structure.** This part of the study involves a consideration of the nature of the drama as a literary form. What is a drama? How does it differ from a novel and from a narrative poem? Is the distinguishing characteristic of the dramatic (a) dialogue; or (b) division into acts and scenes; or (c) a series of climaxes; or (d) a conflict of wills; or (e) an embodiment of contrast? Which of these theories of dramatic workmanship most successfully applies to "Julius Cæsar"? How do

you distinguish between physical action and dramatic action? Apply to this play the precept of Aristotle that a drama must have (a) a beginning, (b) a middle, and (c) a conclusion. What do you mean by the climax of a play? How does it differ from the conclusion? To what extent are the traditional "unities" of time, place and action observed in "Julius Cæsar"? Answering these and similar questions involves a comparison of "Julius Cæsar" with other dramas and with representative novels and poems.

3. **Structure of Parts.** "Julius Cæsar," though essentially a drama, contains specimens of the forms of discourse commonly classified as narration, description, exposition and argumentation. Specimens of each of those forms should be discussed and analyzed and compared. For instance, the play contains two passages that may roughly be called orations. Which of them—the speech of Brutus, or the speech of Antony—is a true oration, and why? Which of them appeals mainly to the intellect, and which mainly to the emotions? Which of the two orators talks over the heads of his auditors? Compare these speeches with other speeches in Shakespeare—such as Portia's plea for mercy and Richard III's address to his troops before the Battle of Bosworth. Compare them with representative orations such as Webster's Bunker Hill address and Robert Emmet's vindication. As a result of such comparisons attempt to formulate

the essential qualities of a good oration. Follow a similar method of procedure with passages that are mainly narrative and descriptive.

4. **Verse Form.** What do you suppose was Shakespeare's motive in writing some portions of the play in verse and others in prose? Strengthen your opinion by comparing the prose and the verse portions of "Julius Cæsar" with the corresponding portions of other Shakespearean plays. Most of the metrical portions of "Julius Cæsar" are written in blank verse, but occasional rhymes are introduced; what is the purpose of the rhyming lines? Apply your knowledge of English prosody (meter, rhyme, rhythm, stress, etc.) to the verse portions of the play. Why is scansion in English verse of less moment than in Latin verse? Quote passages from the verse portions of this play which would lose much of their effect if written in prose. Is it easier to write blank verse than to write rhyming verse? Try it, and see. Compare a bit of Shakespeare's blank verse with passages from Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Tennyson's "Idyls of the King." In which of the three poets do you find the highest degree of (a) smoothness, (b) majesty, (c) vigor, (d) variety? Which is easiest to memorize? Why? Note how the correct reading of Shakespeare's blank verse shows that certain words were pronounced differently in his day, that, for instance, **interred** is a trisyllable in the line,

"The good is oft interred with their bones";

that, generally, the terminal syllable **tion** approximates more closely to **she-on** than to our present-day **shun**.

5. **Figures of Speech.** This phase of the study involves nothing more than an application to "Julius Cæsar" of the classification of figurative language set forth in the ordinary school rhetoric. For some reason or other, the dissection of figures of speech receives far too much attention in some classes; indeed, we have known of instances where it constituted the sum total of literary study. That is an abuse; but the abuse of a pedagogical aid is no argument against its judicious and rightly proportioned use.

6. **Sentence Characteristics.** We have here an opportunity of peeping into Shakespeare's workshop and seeing just how he put his words together. Let us take such a sentence as the following:

"The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks;
They are all fire and every one doth shine;
But there's but one in all doth hold his place:
So in the world; 'tis furnish'd well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshak'd of motion: and that I am he,
Let me a little show it, even in this;
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so."

Here we have three general divisions: a comparison, an assertion and a proof. The comparison, as all comparisons must have, has two members: The skies painted with unnumber'd sparks, and

the world furnished well with men. The element of **dissimilarity** on which the **simile** is based is the distinction, in the skies and in the world, between the **many** and the **one**: The stars are all fire and they all shine, the men are flesh and blood and apprehensive; the one star doth hold his place, the one man holds on his rank. Now comes, with the tremendous emphasis of brevity, the assertion: **I am he**; and here we have the backbone, the apex, the climax of the sentence, which flows gracefully and impressively to its conclusion by means of the proof of the assertion. The proof, preceded by the transitional element, "Let me a little show it, even in this," consists of two parts: **I was constant** and **I am constant**.

The foregoing is an example of the sort of sentence analysis that best serves to bring out the meaning of the text studied, to develop the observation and critical judgment of the student and to reveal the proper manner of using words, the material of spoken and written speech. There is considerably less pedagogical worth in the old method of breaking up the sentence into its component clauses and resting satisfied with a perception of the purely grammatical relations of their parts. A sentence must be regarded primarily and essentially as the expression of a thought; to interject mention of correlative phrases and subordinate clauses is merely to confuse the issue. The student who learns to analyze a sentence with

reference to the correspondence of thought to expression will *absorb* correct usage instead of learning it out of a book; and when it is secured by means of absorption it stands a much better chance of becoming an integral part of his thought process and his expression process.

For the rest, the ordinary classification of sentences into declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory; into simple, complex and compound; into periodic, loose, balanced and mixed, may be applied to suitable passages of the play. The text will furnish material for illustrations of the teachings of the student's manual of rhetoric. The one caution to be kept in mind is that classification and analysis are means, not ends.

7. **Word Characteristics.** The possibilities of study from this point of view are almost infinite. For example, in the sentence already used for another purpose, let us take **his** in the third line. Why not **its**? An alert pupil might offer the explanation that Shakespeare is personifying the north star; but such is far from the fact. Rather, the poet, for the purpose of his comparison, holds in his mind a distinction between the inanimate stars and the living men of flesh and blood. The explanation is found in the simple but illuminating historical fact that the word **its** was not in use in Shakespeare's day; the possessive singular of **it** was **his**, even as at present the possessive plural, **their** or **theirs**, is applied indiscriminately to things

as well as to persons. Again, there is the word **apprehensive**, in the fifth line of our excerpt. In modern usage the word means something very different from what was in Shakespeare's mind. A man is apprehensive when he fears an impending disaster, when he is vaguely conscious of an approaching calamity. In that sense, in the modern sense, it could be said that in this play Calpurnia was apprehensive when she begged Cæsar not to leave his house on the morning of the fatal day. But in the line,

"And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive,"

the word means, capable of reasoning, of understanding; endowed with intelligence. And then we look to the derivation of the word and find that it came into English through the French from a Latin verb meaning, literally (**ad-prehendo**), to grasp, to lay hold of something. In the modern sense, we **lay hold** of an unpleasant likelihood; in the Shakespearean sense, we are able to **lay hold** of intellectual entities.

8. **Allusions and References.** A reference is direct, an allusion is indirect. I allude when I speak of "a distinguished citizen of Oyster Bay," and I refer when I speak of "the late Theodore Roosevelt." A very important part of our study of "Julius Cæsar" is to understand the allusions and references with which the play abounds: Lupercalia, Pompey's statue, the ides of March, rascal

counters, Anchises; and—this not least in importance—the cobbler's shower of puns in the opening scene of the play. It is here that school editions with notes are really helpful.

CHAPTER VI

MANNER IN THE ESSAY

IN every piece of good writing matter, manner and mood are agreeably fused, just as in every good orchestra brass and wood and string instruments are agreeably harmonized. The literary masterpiece is like the fair valley in Dante's "Purgatorio" where nature wrought "of the sweetness of a thousand odors one rare and blended fragrance." In art as in life the finished product is a synthesis. But when we study a masterpiece—of living, of orchestration or of writing—we necessarily proceed to analysis, to taking to pieces. We isolate the component parts and examine them separately.

We are intent on *matter* when we answer the question, What does this author teach us? We are intent on *mood* when we answer the question, What does this author make me feel? We are intent on *manner* when we answer the question, How does this author impart the lesson and how does he convey his emotional mood?

The study of *manner* in the essay is an application of the principle of *formal appreciation* in the study of literature. From this point of view we consider the essay in its technical aspects, as a

work of art. It is a piece of good writing; and, interested as we are in the process of learning how to write, we take the masterpiece to pieces to find out how it has been constructed. We consider the general plan of the work—what the author proposed to himself as the scope and method of the essay. We examine the order and arrangement of his ideas, and the devices he employed to secure emphasis, ease and variety. We study his paragraph structure, noting in several instances how he expanded and developed the germ of thought contained in his topic sentence; and we observe where the topic sentence comes at the beginning of the paragraph, where it comes at the end, where it comes in the middle, where it is divided and where it is only implied. We make a study of his sentence structure, noting the variety in sentence length and sentence formation. We discuss the author's choice of words and list those words which are new to us or which are used in an unfamiliar sense. In general, we apply all we know of grammar and rhetoric to the essay under consideration.

Manner is the *how* of the essay. We are asking about the author's manner or style when we put such questions as these: Are the sentences generally long or short, relatively simple or highly complex, prevaillingly loose or prevaillingly periodic? Is the essay easy to follow? Is it possible to make a plan of the essay? Is the language familiar and idiomatic, or is it bookish and learned?

The study of manner, therefore, is the study of technique. It involves a classification of the tools of writing and an investigation of the ways those tools are used. Such study has a twofold purpose: First, by means of it we seek to know the author better, to secure a more definite knowledge of what he has to say and of what he thinks and feels; and, secondly, we seek to learn how to express our own thoughts and feelings. The study of style or manner is the connecting link between reading and writing. Without reading, we should have no material to analyze; and without writing, we should be unable to carry our findings into fruitful practice.

Some notion of the importance of giving due attention to manner in literary study may be gained from De Quincey's famous essay on style, in the course of which he speaks of "that general principle in England which tends in all things to set the matter above the manner, the substance above the external show—a principle noble in itself, but inevitably wrong wherever [as is the case with every genuine literary masterpiece] the manner blends inseparably with the substance." The study of style enables us to evaluate an author and to admire his ability, not blindly or impressionably, but with poise and discrimination. As De Quincey well puts it, "to feel is not to feel consciously. Many a man is fascinated by the artifices of composition who fancies that it is the subject which has operated

so potently. . . . That is good rhetoric for the hustings which is bad for a book."

Every worthwhile writer is susceptible of study from the viewpoints of matter, manner and mood, for in every piece of good writing all three elements find place. But every writer is, consciously or otherwise, mainly concerned with one of the three. In Charles Lamb it is the mood which chiefly matters; we do get some information from the gentle Elia and we do learn something of the art of writing; but for the most part we read him because of the lure and variety of his moods. In Coleridge's prose, notably the "Biographia Literaria" and the "Lectures on Shakespeare," while we observe the mood of the scholar and the practiced art of the literary man, we are mainly intent on the substance, the matter, the thought; Coleridge's prose is deserving of our best efforts because of the information and stimulation it imparts, because it embodies the utterances of a man of keen and ripened intellect who has much to tell us that we might profitably learn. Lamb is like a whimsical acquaintance who sits by the fire chatting about this, that and the other, coloring books and men and life, teacups, chimney sweeps and card games, with the glow of his fancy; Coleridge is like a dignified and erudite teacher, enshrined behind a thickly littered desk, who points out to us the significant things in Milton and Shakespeare and who discusses his friend Wordsworth less as

a man than as a literary craftsman. In Lamb it is the mood that chiefly concerns us; in Coleridge it is the matter.

In the most representative work of De Quincey, however, it is neither matter nor mood. Neither mood nor matter is notably deficient in De Quincey, as may be verified by a glance at his description of his little sister's death and at the essay on style from which we have just quoted; but in his most characteristic passages—in "Joan of Arc," for instance, and in "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow"—our attention is predominantly attracted—sometimes, indeed, virtually distracted—to the manner, to the style. The "poetic prose" of this "great soul in a frail body," as Francis Thompson describes him, has been lavishly praised and as unsparingly condemned; but if we were to indicate any appreciable flaw in the rare and startling music he evokes from his torrentuous flow of golden words it would be the fact that often in reading him we forget what he is saying because of the splendor and sheer dexterity of the way he says it. He is a prestidigitator. He twirls spirals of parti-colored phrases, balances towering structures of tropes and flashes fleet-footed sentences out of a receptacle which in other hands would remain neither more nor less than a painfully commonplace top hat.

But De Quincey, despite the splendor of his manner, will prove less suitable for a class study

in style than one of his less brilliant but more dependable contemporaries, Thomas Babington Macaulay. It is not difficult to say disparaging things about Macaulay's style and it is not easy to justify some of his more irritating mannerisms; but taken at his most representative—which, in his case, is at his best—he offers a fine subject for helpful analysis. How refreshingly clear he is! His essays are veritable structures, architectural creations, part sustaining part, varied in detail and unified as a whole. There is nothing cloudy, nothing uncertain in Macaulay's style; we may not always agree with his opinions, but we certainly cannot fail to understand them. His transitions from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph are at once graceful and lucid. His paragraph structure is strikingly consistent: If he starts with a general statement, he never fails to explain or prove or amplify it by means of several specific statements, and those specific statements are arranged with a view to their cumulative effect.

Let the class read his essay on Johnson or his deservedly popular tribute to the Catholic Church (the third paragraph in his review of Von Ranke's "History of the Popes") and then discuss his way of saying things, the *how* of his literary art. Some valuable suggestions for such a discussion will be found in an old but excellent textbook, William Minto's "Manual of English Prose Literature." Then let the class formulate what it considers the

leading traits of Macaulay's manner. The result would include findings on his choice of words, on the length and kind of his sentences, on his paragraph structure, on his use of such devices as antithesis, repetition and climax, on his fondness for specific rather than generic ideas, on his employment of means to secure and maintain clearness, order and interest.

From Macaulay the pupils will learn much regarding the art of writing. They will realize the importance of vivid, picturesque images. Macaulay does not say, "Dr. Johnson at one period of his life was noted for acting in a very strange manner"; he states directly and crisply the things Johnson did; he pictures the portly lexicographer touching the posts in the street as he passed and even going back to touch one he had overlooked, and startling a drawing room by twitching off a young lady's shoe or ejaculating a phrase from the Lord's Prayer. He does not say, "The Catholic Church comes down from the days when the pagans adored false gods and held their cruel games"; instead he makes the idea vivid and forceful in the lines:

"No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre."

From Macaulay the pupils will learn the art, not merely of *telling* things, but of making the

reader *see* things. Observe how the author makes a living figure of young Johnson at Oxford with his tattered gown and broken shoes; how he draws in a few bold strokes the elderly widow—"painted half an inch thick"—whom Johnson happily married; how he reconstructs two periods in history by his reference to "the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century" and "the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth"; how he compels a realization of the indefectibility of the Church, not by simply saying with the Baltimore Catechism that "the Church as Christ founded it will last till the end of time," but by appealing to memory and imagination in the words: "The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustin, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila."

In the study of style there must be room for adverse as well as favorable criticism, for censure as well as appreciation. Every writer has the defects of his virtues, and the pupils learn something from observing the shortcomings of the author. In the case of Macaulay, though there is lack of discrimination in the oft-repeated saying that he would tell a lie to turn a period, instances can be found where his desire to be picturesque in description or balanced in sentence structure leads him into inaccuracy. Thus it is that in his review of Bos-

well's "Life of Johnson" his effort to establish a contrast between the greatness of the book and the littleness of the man who wrote it makes him distinctly unfair to Boswell; the little Scotsman was by no means the burr on Johnson's coattails that Macaulay's picture makes of him. Nor was Mrs. Porter, who became Johnson's wife, altogether the impossible creature whom the doctor so ardently admired; love may be blind, but even in Johnson's case it could hardly be as blind as that. Similarly, Macaulay sacrifices exactness of statement for rhetorical effectiveness when he represents the long line of the Popes extending into the past "till it is lost in the twilight of fable." There was no twilight and no fable whatever about the origin of the Papacy, as Macaulay himself very well knew, for he was so familiar with the list of the august dynasty that he was supposed to be able to recite it backwards.

In the class discussions concerning the effectiveness of the stylistic methods and devices of an author there will doubtless arise differences of opinion. This is well, for the clash of thought will induce new and deeper thought, and the pupils will learn the salutary truth that much may be said on both sides. Thus it is possible to find good arguments both pro and con anent the traveller from New Zealand who makes his appearance in the last sentence of the paragraph from the essay on Von Ranke. On the one hand it is said that

Macaulay spoils his brilliant tribute by a reference to a vague, remote and highly improbable occurrence, that the "broken arch of London bridge" and "the ruins of St. Paul's" make no appeal to an active, practical mind, and that the New Zealander is literally and figuratively far-fetched. On the other hand it is urged that the sentence forms a fitting and climacteric conclusion to the paragraph, that it points the moral and adorns the tale, that, especially, it tells the truth; for the Catholic Church will exist, even were the islands of the sea to become the center of civilization and London were to take its silent place with Babylon and Tyre. In fact, it would not be out of harmony with Macaulay's mood to suggest that under such circumstances the traveller from the antipodes would probably be a Catholic parish priest on his vacation!

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The essayist is a theatrical producer, a stage director of insight, experience and artistic skill. When we read his work uncritically we are merely sitting in the auditorium observing the excellence of his matter, the deftness of his manner, the glory of his mood. But when we study the style of his writings, we go behind the scenes and study the mechanism of his mimic world. And we learn to go forth and make worlds of our own.

CHAPTER VII

MOOD IN THE DRAMA

THE obvious reply to the question, "How am I to bring out the æsthetic element in teaching Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar'?" would be: Simply apply to the play the principles of the science of æsthetics. Now, that answer is in a great measure impressive, even reassuring, and to the professional educationist—who must be rigidly differentiated from the professional educator—it may even settle the difficulty forever. The thing is so very, very simple. Here you have the literary masterpiece—that is Exhibit A; and here you have the principles of æsthetics—call them Exhibit B. Stir Exhibit A and Exhibit B together for the space of one class period—adding the salt of wit and the pepper of tact according to taste—and let the decoction cool gradually; that is all.

That were indeed all, but for one thing. It is dangerous, and sometimes fatal, to make free use of arbitrary, ready-made principles of æsthetics. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a science of æsthetics; and there is no such personage as an infallible æsthetic pope. Authorities on æsthetics we certainly have; but they are not absolute and

unquestioned authorities. Lessing, for example, differs with Aristotle, and—to become very modern for a moment—Mr. Willard Huntington Wright differs with Lessing. We have no set of æsthetic principles which we can apply to “Julius Cæsar” or to any other masterpiece with the assurance that if the masterpiece conforms to them it is a work of art and if it ignores them it is a monstrosity. Let every teacher ponder the sad case of Tolstoy. In his entertaining little book, “What Is Art?” Tolstoy formulated a definition of art, and then, in the light of his definition, proceeded to demonstrate, to his own manifest satisfaction, that Beethoven was no musician, that Michelangelo was no sculptor, that Titian was no painter, that Shakespeare was no dramatist. He assumed that his definition was true, sound, conclusive and all-embracing, and thence was forced to the conviction that some of the world’s supreme artists were really not artists at all.

What, then, are we to do? We are to begin, not with principles of æsthetics, but with the masterpiece; we are to proceed not deductively, but inductively. We must not start out by formulating or adopting certain principles of æsthetics and asking ourselves, “Does ‘Julius Cæsar’ conform to these principles?” But we must study the play and formulate our principles of æsthetics in the light of that study. The remainder of these sug-

gestions are practical hints as to how such a study may be carried on.

1. A cursory reading of "Julius Cæsar" makes plain to us that in the play we have a diversity of scenes—street scenes, domestic scenes; day scenes, night scenes; council scenes, battle scenes. And we have a diversity of events—secret plotting, public speaking, thunder and lightning, a tender colloquy between a husband and his wife, the assassination of a monarch, the visitation of a ghost. And we have a diversity of characters—Brutus, the idealist; Cassius, the wily politician; an extremely witty shoemaker; an extremely stupid senator (Casca); Portia, the faithful wife; Antony, the incomparable orator. From all this we are justified in concluding that one essential characteristic of the play is *variety* or *diversity*. And, when we reflect a little, we perceive that in other works of art some sort of diversity is recognizable—in great novels and great paintings and great musical scores. Variety, therefore, we may assume, is one element of æsthetic excellence.

But second thought will speedily convince us that not all variety makes for art. A list of fifty words culled at random from a dictionary, twenty daubs of assorted colors on a canvas, would manifest diversity, but certainly not artistic diversity. How can we distinguish between the variety which is artistic and the variety which is not? We turn again to "Julius Cæsar" for light. And now we

make the important discovery that running through the diversity of scenes, events and characters, there is a thread of *unity* which coördinates them and binds them together and welds them into a concentrated appeal to our intellects and our emotions. That thread of unity is indicated in the title of the play, *Julius Cæsar*. Cæsar living and, more especially, Cæsar dead, dominates all the scenes, all the events, all the characters. The streets are thronged in the first act because Cæsar is coming back to Rome; the field of Philippi is corpse-strewn in the last act because Cæsar's death must be avenged; the storm breaks upon the city as an omen of Cæsar's assassination; the pathetic conversation between Brutus and Portia takes place because the husband has thoughts concerning Cæsar that he dare not reveal to his wife; and all the varied characters—patricians and plebeians, men of thought and men of action, men good and men bad, men wise and men otherwise, are united and brought together by one thing that they have in common—their attitude toward Cæsar; they are with him or against him. Now we see that our fifty words from the dictionary may become a work of art if a master hand forges them into literary *unity*, that our twenty daubs of color, arranged and blended into artistic *unity* by a Rembrandt or a Velasquez, may become a masterpiece.

From all this we formulate our first principle of

æsthetics: **Beauty in literature is a combination of unity and diversity.**

2. We now take a step further. Again reading the play, we observe that, from one point of view, it deals with relatively simple things, things that are taking place around us every day, things that even the youngest of us can understand. One man has achieved great power, and some other men don't like him on that account and some other men do. The men who don't like him plot his death and succeed in killing him. The men who do like him fight with the men who don't like him and defeat them in battle. This note of simplicity, characteristic of the play as a whole, is equally characteristic of the play in detail. The commoner in the first act enjoys "talking back" to the tribune; Portia surmises that her husband has something on his mind; Brutus, in addressing the mob, makes the very common mistake of talking over their heads, while Antony tells them that which they themselves do know; Brutus and Cassius say unpleasant things to each other and then shake hands; overcome by defeat, the leading conspirators commit suicide; Antony fights vigorously against Brutus living and generously praises Brutus dead. Such things are happening around us every day; if we demand proof let us simply open our eyes and our ears, examine our conscience and scan the morning newspaper. So we are warranted in setting down *simplicity* as a trait of a good play; and more

thought and analysis will show us that simplicity is likewise a characteristic of a good novel, a good statue, a good piece of architecture, a good symphony.

But, on the other hand, not all simplicity is artistic. We remember some of those bald passages in Wordsworth, we read some of Walt Whitman's silly catalogues, we investigate some specimens of our present day *vers libre*; and we are at once quite sure that some simplicity is sheer silliness. We know well that the line,

"Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,"

is simple, and yet poetry; and that the line,

"I put my hat upon my head and walked into the Strand,"

is simple, and yet not poetry. Will "Julius Cæsar" enable us to discover the secret of artistic simplicity?

Let us see. A group of men want to do away with Cæsar. That is simple. But they are animated by a *complexity* of motives. Casca is against Cæsar because he is vexed by Cæsar's great popularity; Cassius is against Cæsar because he knows that Cæsar is against him; Brutus is against Cæsar—and here is complexity within complexity—because, though he loves Cæsar much, yet he loves Rome more. Again, the fact that Cæsar is killed by the conspirators is simple; but the assassination is accomplished only after a *complexity* of events. Brutus must be won over to the conspirators; un-

certainty and differences of opinion characterize the meeting in Brutus's garden; on the morning of the fatal day Cæsar is going to the capitol; then, at his wife's urging, he determines to remain at home; after that, he decides to go; and a few minutes later he tells everybody that he is constant as the northern star; before the conspirators carry out their purpose, Antony must be taken away from the scene; Brutus and Cassius get certain warning that news of their design has leaked out; Cæsar is warned of the plot against him—will he take precautions?

Hence we formulate our second principle of æsthetics: **Beauty in literature is a combination of simplicity and complexity.**

3. Another reading of the play brings out a not less interesting fact. Shakespeare does wonderful things with words. For instance, he constructs in Antony's oration a masterpiece of oratory. As we read the lines, the words fall easily and naturally, almost inevitably, into their places. The speech is smooth, graceful, sonorous. It is suggestive, inspiring. Take the lines,

“’Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
The day he overcame the Nervii.”

Even the dullest mind can understand what those lines mean; even the feeblest fancy can construct a picture of the conqueror, after the perils and heat of the battle, wrapping his mantle about him

and gazing through the half-open door of his tent at the summer fields glowing in the sunset. Yes, it gives the impression of infinite ease in writing.

Well, suppose we try to write something like it. Since it seems so facile a thing to do, suppose we forthwith write an oration of our own. Will the fruits of our pen approach the artistic excellence of our model? Probably not! But why? We lack Shakespeare's vocabulary? But he uses very simple words. The proper noun excepted, there is no word in the two lines just quoted but may be found in the vocabulary of the average child of ten. What is the secret of his style, of the force, the vigor, the impressiveness of his diction?

Let us read those two lines again, let us read the speech of Antony again, let us read the entire play again, and perhaps we shall discover something like this: Beneath the ease, the grace, the smoothness of Shakespeare's flowing words, we perceive the incessant palpitation of a tremendous force, a vigorous effort, a vitalizing energy; the throbbing workings of a high-powered mind, the vivid strivings of a richly equipped imagination, the searchless depths and glowing splendor of an emotional nature exceptionally varied and sympathetic. It is the art that conceals art—which is another way of saying, the work that conceals work. Then we think of great musicians we have heard, of fine orators at whose words we thrilled, of masterpieces of painting that in imagination we see again, of

statuary that at the touch of memory's wand breaks into warm and vibrant life; and in the light of it all we formulate our third æsthetic principle:

Beauty in literature is a combination of energy and ease, of ruggedness and grace.

This brief presentation of æsthetic principles evolved from an inductive study of "Julius Cæsar" lays itself open to numerous and multiform attacks from hidebound critics equipped with a stock of ready-made æstheticism all canned and labeled and with full directions for use printed neatly on the cover. We have said never a word concerning pathos or sublimity or humor; we have ignored the weighty utterances of Horace and Vida and Boileau; we have lent a deaf ear to Scaliger and Castelvetro and Geraldi Cinthio. And this we have done, not because we are indifferent to the theories and suggestions of erudite makers of books about books, but because these lines are written for teachers. The teacher cannot afford to be hidebound. The teacher cannot afford to let his æsthetic principles harden into molds. The teacher will do well to lead each succeeding class of students to formulate a few æsthetic principles for themselves and to consider those principles as serviceable scaffolding which, when the fabric of æsthetic appreciation is finished, are but so much old lumber to be permanently cast aside.

CHAPTER VIII

MOOD IN THE ESSAY

THE study of *mood* in the essay is an application of the principle of *æsthetic appreciation* in literature. Let it never be forgotten that literature—that all art, indeed—is largely a matter of mood. In this sense a mood means the fusing, the concentrating of the writer's personality and experience upon a subject viewed in the light of a moment winsome or reminiscent or whimsical or humorous or what not. It is in mood that essays and essayists differ so widely each from each; and it is in the mood of the essay or the essayist that the reader secures his keenest enjoyment.

Mood is defined as "a temporary or capricious state or condition of the mind in regard to passion or feeling; temper of mind; humor; disposition." Less accurately but more suggestively, we might describe our moods as the coloring of our lives. Sometimes, in theatrical performances, vari-colored lights are cast upon the stage and the performers, and surprising and delightful effects are thus secured. The scene and the costumes remain the same, and yet they acquire a different appearance with each light that falls upon them. So it is with

our lives. The facts of life, the realities of life, remain ever the same; but the moods casting upon them various colors—now yellow, now crimson, now pink, now blue—change their aspect and lend them various degrees of attractiveness and charm.

Writers such as Charles Lamb, who are especially gifted in the facility for conveying and stimulating moods, are like the manipulators of the colored lights in the theater. Ordinarily they tell us nothing new; but they enable us to see old things and familiar things in novel and fascinating lights. This is not the least of the consolations we are able to derive from the study of literature, and it should be given due prominence in the teaching of both poetry and prose. Let us learn to enjoy the witchery of the colored lights by sitting in the auditorium while familiar persons and things occupy the stage and the gentle Elia manipulates the calcium.

First of all, a lady walks upon the stage. She is our aunt. Now there are all sorts and conditions of aunts; and there are all sorts of ways of considering aunts. There are indulgent aunts, and sinister aunts; aunts with the demeanor of a martinet, and aunts with the disposition of an angel; aunts tall and angular, and aunts plump and rosy; aunts who give us cakes and apples, and aunts who give us lectures. And the same aunt may assume several distinct aspects according to the quality of our moods and hers. In his essay on "My Relations," Lamb throws a pale green light upon his

aunt, and presently we see her as "one whom single blessedness had soured to the world," "from morning till night poring over good books," "a fine old Christian" "with some little asperities in her constitution." It does not take much reading between the lines to discover that the shorn lamb must have suffered somewhat at the hands of this painfully pious old lady, but his mood will not suffer him to dwell on the tears of his youth. The passing years are great softeners of hardships, and in the pale green light the lady seems a bit odd but fairly lovable.

In several of the essays Lamb chats about old players whom he had admired and loved. He reveled in the theater because he reveled in life, and his heart was filled with keen and not unspoken gratitude to the men who had strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage. Let us read "My First Play," "On Some of the Old Actors," "On the Acting of Munden," "Munden's Farewell" and "The Death of Munden." In these beautiful papers the author casts upon the stage and the players a soft orange glow in which all the harsher outlines are subdued and everything about the theater worthy of praise and honor is heightened and improved. How different is this mood from that which characterizes Gossen's "School of Abuse" or that which animates some present-day editorial writers who seem intent on finding in the drama only that which may be censured and abused! And how delicately

does the soft orange light enable us to draw the distinction between the man and the actor:

"The regular playgoers ought to put on mourning, for the king of broad comedy is dead to the drama!—Alas!—Munden is no more!—give sorrow vent. He may yet walk the town, pace the pavement in a seeming existence—eat, drink, and nod to his friends in all the affectation of life—but Munden,—the Munden!—Munden, who with the bunch of countenances, the bouquet of faces, is gone forever from the lamps, and, as far as comedy is concerned, is as dead as Garrick! When an actor retires (we will put the suicide as mildly as possible) how many worthy persons perish with him!"

Wonderful, truly wonderful, is that soft orange light of a mood. It warms our hearts and it brings the ready tears to our eyes; and to our memory it recalls the old days and the plays and the transitory character of human fame. And it leads us gently to face the truth that we are all actors in what Calderón called the Great Theater of the World, and that the green curtain called Death is ever pendant, waiting for the Prompter's bell.

Yes, we are all actors; and there are times when we all love to play—to play in the spacious Garden of What Might Have Been and to cull the fanciful and fragrant flowers known as Won't-Come-Trues. Our smiling magician of the calcium lamp now floods the stage with rosy lights, and we all delightedly join in the joyous game of "Let's Pre-

tend." Read "Oxford in the Vacation" and you will find out what I mean. Lamb shows us the sorely tried and very tired little clerk in the South Sea House reaching out in imagination for the scholastic honors which were destined never to be his. Like the little boy in one of Thomas Hardy's unpleasant novels, he yearns for the light and learning of the university town; and in fancy he finds more recompense there than Jude the Obscure found in the reality. He goes to Oxford in the vacation and pretends he is a student—and a don:

"I can here play the gentleman, enact the student. . . . Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted *ad eundem*. I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for me. In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments I proceed Master of Arts. . . . Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor."

But life is not all roses—nor rose colored lights. Too long we may not linger in the Garden of What Might Have Been. We who read these lines are by profession teachers, pedagogues, educators—or schoolmasters, as Lamb would say. Can the whimsical Elia throw one of his colored lights upon our life and work, can he make us forget the chalkdust

and the exercise books and the scraping feet and the three o'clock fatigue? Can he smooth the furrows from our disciplinary brow and make us smile at ourselves? Can he give us help and inspiration for the days to come?

The answer may be found in "The Old and the New Schoolmaster" and "Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago." From the point of view of modern "scientific" pedagogy, Lamb is doubtless very deficient both in wisdom and grace; he is not "up-to-date" at all. But—and this is a vastly more important matter—he is human, glowingly, irrepressibly human. Much of the little play at Christ's Hospital is enacted while Elia floods the stage with a light sad and dully blue; but ever and anon there flashes the gold of his quaint and dainty humor. All of us will find in this pensive reminiscence material for reflection and for resolution. And all of us may fittingly apply to ourselves some part of the description of the temperamental Boyer:

"He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of different omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discolored, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy*, or *passionate* wig. No comet expounded surer."

All the glory of his golden pink rays Lamb now pours on what the modern world would consider the most useless and cumbersome of all our heri-

tage from the past—the sun dial. In his “Old Benchers of the Inner Temple” he thus glorifies the dial and with mock indignation castigates the moon-faced and officious clock:

“What a dead thing is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dullness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure, and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian virtues. Why is it almost everywhere vanished? If its business use be superseded by more elaborate inventions, its moral uses, its beauty, might have pleaded for its continuance. It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sunset, of temperance, and good hours. It was the primitive, the horologe of the first world. Adam could scarce have missed it in Paradise.”

This mood—a fullness of the golden light of love for things old-fashioned and for songs long sung—is the prevailing, the distinctive, the characteristic mood of Charles Lamb. And that is why, it seems to me, he should be assiduously read by young men and women, especially by young teachers. For the ordinary trait of youth is impatience of the old, and Elia, so shrewd and good-humored and observant and ready of phrase, will act as a salutary corrective. He merits the attention and the love of children, too, for he, more than most English writers, will teach them the much disprized virtue of reverence; he, more than the flashy and super-

ficial idols of their untutored hearts, will develop their bump of veneration.

Lamb—and in his case we may profitably study the man in order to love the writer—had a number of delightful perversities. Warned by a friend that he should write more for the age in which he lived, Elia contemptuously replied, "Hang the Age!" And expressed his determination to write for posterity or for antiquity—it didn't matter which. He was an urban soul, and had little sympathy with the poet's puling verses about the "bruising city." When Wordsworth dilated on the natural glories of the lake region, Lamb retorted that not all the rural scents of Windermere were as savory in his nostrils as the smell of a bakeshop in the Strand.

A genuine humorist is Charles Lamb; and like every true humorist, he knew the meaning of suffering and of sorrow. We have no space here to dilate on the great shadow that lengthened itself through most of his years, of the happy hopes which at the call of duty he manfully put aside, of the anguish which might have driven a lesser soul into pessimistic bitterness but which in his case was but the steel on which he sharpened the edge of his genial wit. Those of us who would know him at his finest and truest and noblest and best, those of us who seek his mastery of the moods at its highest manifestation would do well to read—several times—his little essay, "Dream Children: A Reverie." Permit me to stress that "several times."

First impressions may be misleading; but final impressions will bring us verily to the heart of life.

In this life of ours there are different days for different moods, and different moods for different days. And there are writers to suit every day and every mood. There are moods for Browning and days for Shelley, days for Carlyle and moods for Belloc, days and moods which blend harmoniously with Francis Thompson and Crashaw, with Kipling and old Robert Herrick. But Charles Lamb—and of how many writers may this thing be said?—has a page for every day and for every mood. Happy are we and happy are our pupils when we have learned that on days gray or gold, in moods wailful or serene, we may find congenial company in the pages of Elia.

CHAPTER IX

SOME PRINCIPLES IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

I. Literature Is Chiefly Concerned with Authentic Human Emotions. History records what man has done; philosophy, what he has thought; literature, what he has felt. Literature has something to say, in an incidental way, about man's accomplishments and about his theories of existence; but its essential field is the domain of human emotion. We turn to Herodotus for Greek history; to Aristotle for Greek philosophy; to Sophocles for Greek literature. Hence, the teacher of literature acts wisely when he stresses, not the purely intellectual nor the purely scientific phases of his subject, but its emotional content. Great literature plays upon our emotions of love and fear and admiration and gratitude and reverence and pity and joy; it moves us and it thrills.

By *authentic* emotions we mean the feelings that pertain to our common humanity, that ring true to universal human experience. The classics—that is, the great books of past ages—present emotions that stir us even across the chasm of the years, because we find in them echoes of what we ourselves have felt and understood. The sisterly devotion of Antigone, the fine spirit of comradeship of the

faithful Achates, Dante's reverence for his old master even in the depths of hell, the remorse of Macbeth, the pretentiousness of Monsieur Jourdain, the unsated yearning of Faust—these are representative human feelings, and are therefore authentic. In its essentials, human emotion does not change throughout the ages.

Wise is the teacher who strives to bring young minds to realize that in this respect there is verily nothing new under the sun; that, because they are true to universal human life, the great books can never die.

II. In the Firmament of Literature, Star Differeth from Star in Glory. "Resolved, that Shakespeare is a greater writer than Longfellow." Tradition has it—I devoutly hope that tradition herein errs—that such was the topic once set for children to debate. Such misconceptions of literary values sometimes result from the textbook study of literature in which a writer's relative importance is measured by the number of pages devoted to a discussion of his life and works.

Our pupils must be brought to recognize that both Shakespeare and Longfellow are worth while, that both have given us valuable interpretations of human life; yet that "Evangeline" compared with "Macbeth" is as a penny whistle compared with a typhoon.

Some of them will need to be warned against a condescending attitude toward penny whistles.

They must be taught to appreciate the lesser lights as well as first magnitude stars. A right sense of proportion in literary matters seeks to appraise every sincere record of authentic human emotion precisely for what it is worth. And the most salutary attitude of the pupil should be: What has Shakespeare to teach me; what has Longfellow to teach me? It is well that we be stirred to the depths of our soul by the spectacle of ambition and unwise love and unavailing remorse staged for us in the drama of the Thane of Cawdor; and it is likewise well that the surface of our soul be ruffled and purified by the contemplation of the Acadian maiden's tried and beautiful life.

The study of literature is not a competitive exercise. Hence, class discussions involving the question whether or not Cardinal Newman is a greater writer than Aristophanes are idle and even harmful. To what extent, rather we should ask, did each of those two widely different writers reveal and interpret our common human life? That question voices a basic principle of literary study.

III. Right Reading Broadens Our Sympathies. Our outlook on the world of books must be catholic—with the small "c" as well as with the capital. The great books lead us out of the walled garden of our individual environment and offer us the alluring possibility of living vicariously in other times and alien lands. The fine fruitage of literary culture includes a comprehensive understanding of

many phases of human emotion that we can never, in the nature of things, expect to learn from personal experience.

Observe how narrow is the range of the boy's interests. He doesn't like "sissy books," that is, books that deal mainly with the life and experiences of girls; he characterizes stories that stress the description of natural scenery as offensively "dry"; he is very suspicious of Dickens, because the pictures show people in old-fashioned clothes; "Fabiola" is "too pious," "Cranford" lacking in the indispensable element of "fighting"; Scott is too slow in starting, Thackeray altogether too long. Now, one of the reasons why the teacher exists is to show that boy that folks who have narrow likes miss much of the fun and much of the opportunity and much of the consolation of life. And this the teacher accomplishes, not by scolding, not by exhorting, not by command or entreaty, but by the tactful process of arousing interest in some phase or other of the too hastily condemned book.

As the boy reads and grows and lives—all three processes being subject to adequate though not obtrusive direction—he comes to perceive that even "sissies" have their uses in life as in books, that there is so much natural scenery in the world around us that its importance in literature is great, that under antiquated garments there often beat surprisingly modern hearts, that some of the greatest men and books have been frankly devotional, that

manifestations of the combative instinct are in inverse ratio to our advance in civilization, that it is worth while waiting for some good things to start and that excellence in books as in life cannot be measured with a yardstick or a stopwatch.

IV. Poetry Should Be Read Aloud. Nobody in his sober senses would content himself with studying a masterpiece of painting by means of the sense of touch or absorbing a musical composition by thumbing the score. Yet there are persons who seem satisfied by merely looking at a poem.

The appeal of poetry is fundamentally to the ear. It has a musical element, and that musical element is its distinguishing formal characteristic. It demands vocal interpretation.

"Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane

In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branchèd thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind."

Here are four lines from the "Ode to Psyche"; but until they are read aloud they are not representative of John Keats. So much depends upon the vocal interpreter! He must decide the degree of resoluteness to be suggested by "Yes," and determine whether "I will be thy priest" is an assurance or a threat. His imagination must turn architect at "build a fane" and construct a cathedral of the frozen music of angelic songs. He must convey the stillness and the sanctity of the forest primeval at mention of "some untrodden region," the word

"some" being so rendered as to charm by its very indefiniteness. He must make contagious his own expansive realization of "branchèd thoughts," the tenderness and novelty of "new-grown," the emotional antithesis of "pleasant pain"; and the last line must have an echo of the wind that blows around the world.

So only can "the breath and finer spirit" of poetry be imparted. Mere analysis can never do it; neither can edifying stories of the poet's pensive life. The teacher of poetry *must* know the technique of vocal expression—quite as much, indeed, as the teacher of singing must know the technique of music. And the children must be taught, little by little, to master a poem *from the inside*, and to render it by means of the speaking voice.

V. Great Books Should Be Re-read Indefinitely. The man of one book is not a worthy exemplar. He is to be dreaded rather than feared, for he is liable to be an intolerable bore. But the man who reads a few great books several times is likely to be a bigger man in every respect—save possibly in self-esteem—than the man who is ever seeking some new thing.

Some men read masterpieces as they suck oranges, and they can be traced through a library by the pulp and rind of the discarded classics which they have exhausted. Great books are not globes of fruit juice, but fountains of living water ever fresh and inexhaustible.

Formalism in education has its place and its benefits, but it has its baleful consequences as well; and not the least of these is the attitude of mind found in many pupils who assume that once a book is read it should remain a closed book forever more. Teachers who never refer back to books studied or discussed last month or last year do much to fortify the unfortunate conviction.

Children, naturally seekers after novelty, should be brought to realize that there are several books which the human race has been reading for centuries and has not quite exhausted even today. The New Testament, for instance, yields more and yet more nourishment every time it is approached; we read the same gospel on the same Sunday year after year and never fail to find in it something hitherto unsuspected.

The best way to re-read is to take a fresh viewpoint—to look for something new in the old book. Now we read it for the plot, now for the characters, now for the scenic colorings, now for its truth to the life about us, now for its truth to the life depicted in other books, now for its truth to the life of a given period of history, now for its embodiment of a truth of faith or a gospel maxim, now for the charm of its literary style. And by that time we are old enough to begin all over again.

VI. The Highest Art Is the Art that Conceals Art. Let us gaze upon that world wonder, the Cathedral of Notre Dame. It is a symphony in

stone, complex in its simplicity, unitary in its variety. It conveys the impression of being finished, adequate, complete. And we feel that we might well believe it were we told that it was not wrought by human hands through hot and toiling years, but that an angel floated down one day from highest Heaven and waved a silver wand, and lo, the Cathedral was.

That is the art that conceals art. We have no suggestion of the excavations made for the foundations, of the carefully pondered plans, of the straining derricks and swaying stones, of the angry shouts of the master builders, of the swarming workmen with sweating faces and corded muscles and aching backs. These are no more suggested by the grand Cathedral than is the caterpillar's crawling life in the careening existence of the emancipated butterfly.

And so it is in literature. The most perfect style is the style that seemingly came by magic, unconsciously and spontaneously. The great drama has no *deus ex machina* let down to the stage on creaking pulleys; the great novel has a plot that rises and falls, not with the exactitude of a Freytagian pyramidal diagram, but with the seeming capriciousness of the contour of the distant hills; the great poem has no suggestion of beats, of measures, of feet, of accented and unaccented syllables, of the toil and anguish of satisfying sound and sense, but just the clear, full melody of the lark's morning song, the majestic music of the waterfall, the

mystery and magic and infinite ease of the wailing of the wind.

The carpenter, when he is finished with his job, sweeps up the chips and sawdust and boxes his tools; and the worker in words removes from his masterpiece the very last indication of his labor before he draws the curtain and bids us enter and do homage.

VII. True Criticism Is Mainly Appreciative.

"I am nothing if not critical," said Iago, meaning that he was mainly interested in finding fault; and later on,

"I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not."

Is it any wonder that Iago was a mischief maker and a thoroughly bad egg? "To spy into abuses" is the favorite diversion of numerous literary Iagos—self-constituted critics whose prevailing attitude toward literary masterpieces resembles that of the ingenuous gentleman who, standing for the first time before the Sistine Madonna, impressively inquired, "What is the fault with that painting?"

Iago criticism is pseudo criticism. The true critic—and remember, please, that every reader is a critic—is less an arbiter than an appreciator; at all events, he need never be a hangman. From reading the best and thinking the best he has formed—or rather, is constantly forming—his literary taste, and when he encounters a book which offends that taste seri-

ously and persistently, he simply dismisses it and turns to another book. But he rarely meets a book that is thoroughly bad. In every book he reads he finds much to admire and something that offends, and the offensive elements he speedily, almost automatically, forgets. He knows that nuts are sweet and highly nutritious though their shells are neither edible nor pleasant to crack. And he can partake profitably of the apples on yonder tree without once remarking that it is a great pity that one can't eat leaves and trunk and that the roots are so very dirty.

Remember how Matthew Arnold put it: "A disinterested endeavor to learn and to propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." That is criticism; that is appreciation. That is a constructive force, not a destructive inutility.

VIII. "The Supreme Excellency Is Simplicity." The teaching of literature is an art second in importance only to the making of literature. They have much in common. Many of the things the teacher learns from the great books of the world he can apply in a practical way to his daily work. Not the least of these is the lesson that the highest art is the art that conceals art, that—as Longfellow, who was both a maker and a teacher, exquisitely phrased it—"the supreme excellency is simplicity."

Therefore, whatever be his panoply of learning, the teacher will wear it lightly and gracefully.

(Strange as it may seem, the scantier his equipment, the harder the task!) He will never make quotations in a language which his pupils do not understand. He will not drag in facts that he has acquired at great cost but which have no bearing on the lesson. He will not assume toward his students—who have not had his advantages—a holier-than-thou attitude in literary affairs.

He will not be dogmatic; literary “laws” are laws not even in the scientific sense, and not one of them had its origin amid the thunders of Sinai; there is no literary pope, and even in its palmyest days the French Academy was not an ecumenical council. He will never forget that the same book may be the strong man’s food and the weak babe’s poison; and he will remember always a beautiful literary allusion concerning the tempered wind and the shorn lamb.

He will be conscious—of course, in a humble, chastened way—of the dignity of his office. He is an inspirer, an initiator; a head usher in the House of Fame. His business is to introduce young people to the greatest minds the world has known; and it is very bad form to make fun of celebrities, even though they be venerable and eccentric.

Above all, he will keep in mind that literature can be made a ladder mounting upward unto God.





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